

## Organization of Early Learning, Care and Afterschool Programs

*The Collaborative, League of Education Voters and the Early Care and Education Coalition drafted this document as a potential resource to the Early Learning Council and to community members. We crafted the document collaboratively building on the work of others in Washington and across the nation.*

## Vision for Early Learning, Care and Afterschool Programs

Young children need nurturing and support at every step of the way, at home, in care and in school. Parents are a child's first and best teacher. Child care, preschool and afterschool also play a vital role in the development and school success of children in Washington State.

*This vision statement for early learning, care and afterschool programs below was developed by the Leadership Council for Early Care and Education (formerly the Child Care Coordinating Committee).*

- **Through quality care and education, beginning at birth, every child will succeed in school and life, and**
- **Washington has a well-functioning and integrated system of state and local agencies, community partners and families focused on quality care and education.**

## Key Guiding Principles

*These key guiding principles were adapted from guiding principles developed by “Kids Matters” partners and the Child Care Coordinating Committee.*

- **Recognize that families are children's first teachers.** All pathways and services provide support to families as children's caregivers and first teachers.
- **Interact with consideration and respect.** Children, parents, families and service providers interact respectfully, with consideration for culture, language, physical and mental abilities, tribal sovereignty, economic status and other unique cultural, community and individual qualities.
- **Provide well-funded, high quality services.** Services for children and families are integrated, child-centered, family-focused, community-guided, accountable, and informed by research and experience. The funding level of the services is proportional to the intensity, duration and comprehensive of those services based on the needs of the child and family.
- **Provide smooth transitions.** Children and families experience seamless transitions throughout the P-16 system. Parents, teachers and early learning, care and

afterschool providers regularly share information throughout the P-16 system on the child's development and education that supports the child's individualized learning.

- **Retain an educated workforce.** Highly qualified and equitably compensated professionals are integral to the success of each child. A system is in place to provide education and training, support and resources, and equitable compensation for early learning, care and afterschool professionals.
- **Use evaluation as a quality improvement strategy.** Evaluation can provide information to improve quality, communicate impact and make decisions regarding programs, services and policies to positively affect outcomes for children and families.

While these principles were drafted for the early learning, care and afterschool, they are just as relevant for K-12 and higher education.

## Urgency/Need

Washington is at a competitive disadvantage. Successful students are an engine of a successful state economy. Right now, unacceptably low rates of success for our students are a call to action.

1) Of every 100 students in Washington who enter kindergarten:

- Only 71 graduate from high school;
- Only 42 enter a community college or university; and
- And only 18 receive a diploma within 6 years of entering college.<sup>1</sup>

2) Much more success for students in K-12, higher education, and the 21st century job market means starting earlier:

- As it is, teachers report that only 60% of new kindergarteners are ready for school.<sup>2</sup> Too many children show up at school behind, too many fall farther behind, and too many never catch up.
- The achievement gap, researchers now say, is in large measure a consequence of a preparation gap. Low-income children average 66% lower on achievement tests in kindergarten than upper-income kids.<sup>3</sup>

3) The jury is in on the benefits of early learning, with extensive research on results. Only the resources are still out.

- Studies estimate an economic return of between \$4 and \$17 for every dollar invested in high quality early learning programs.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Collaborative for Post-Secondary Educational Policy (Data on students who transfer between post-secondary institutions is not available and therefore not included in this calculation.)

<sup>2</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children

<sup>3</sup> Lee and Burkam, 2002

<sup>4</sup> A Benefit Cost Analysis of the Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention, by Leonard N. Masse and Steven Barnett; The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40, 2004.

- Remarkable returns for low-income children are found in research on comparative outcomes for children who received preschool. Compared to peers who did not, they are half as likely to be placed in special education, half as likely to be held back a grade, and twice as likely to earn a college degree.<sup>5</sup>

4) Education reform – adopted in Washington more than ten years ago -- is all about shifting from success for *some* students to success for *all* students. The future of our children and our state hangs in the balance.

- Students must meet high standards and get the advanced training they need to compete for good, family wage jobs.
- Nearly half the employers in Washington report difficulty finding qualified job applicants in our state.<sup>6</sup>

## **Barriers**

Following is a list of current obstacles/problems preventing us from delivering on our vision - an integrated, accessible, high quality early learning, care and afterschool system in Washington State.

### **1) Lack of adequate, stable, long term revenue sources to creating a high quality early learning system in Washington State**

- Chronic underfunding of the existing pieces of the system. Examples include:
  - ✓ Too low wages for child care and ECEAP staff, resulting in high turnover
  - ✓ Too few ECEAP slots to serve all eligible children and to expand eligibility above 110% FPL
  - ✓ Not enough services for providers (example, the mentoring and license application help Child Care Resource and Referral Networks used to be able to provide)
  - ✓ Extremely low child care subsidy rate, impacting low income families ability to access quality programs
- Historical competition for state dollars with stronger constituencies for K-12 and Higher Ed
- Reduction of federal assistance for child care, Head Start and afterschool programs
- The on going state budget crisis
- The continuation of a strong anti-tax movement in our state
- The inability to pass progressive tax reform measures

### **2) Inconsistencies in licensing regulations across settings (e.g. private pay pre-school is not licensed) and lack of information about quality of care for parents**

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<sup>5</sup> Abecedarian Project

<sup>6</sup> Washington State Employers' Workforce Training Needs and Practices 2004, Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/empsur04.pdf>.

- No system of licensing pre-schools, resulting in many programs using the name "pre-school" but no consistency in required staffing, training or program content

**3) Lack of an integrated professional development system that can effectively recruit, train and retain a high quality workforce**

- Lack of a state workforce development/professional development plan
- Significant gaps in the training and education system for teachers and providers

**4) Lack of a measurement system to evaluate programs and policies that are preparing children for school.**

- The Benchmarks are a first step toward a shared agreement about what children need to know and be able to do to be ready for school, but we need a method for assessing and continually strengthening the Benchmarks.

**5) Fragmentation of the overall child care system**

- Fragmentation of state funded pieces of the early learning system : ECEAP is at CTED; child care is at DSHS; OSPI has programs as does DOH
- Not yet commonly accepted agreement, among advocates and policy makers, on what the system should be: are we expanding the K-12 model to pre-school and below? Do we want minimal health and safety monitoring for pre-schools like child care?
- Afterschool programs straddle many systems resulting in a confusing patchwork for children, families and caregivers. Children do best when the experiential learning opportunities of high quality afterschool programs are aligned with school day outcomes for young students. Afterschool programs need to be considered as an integral part of the early learning system.

**6) Lack of awareness about the importance of quality early and afterschool learning and care**

- Early Learning and care not seen as "real education" beyond pre-school (and some doubt about that too!)
- Lack of understanding of the need for professional child care providers (versus baby sitters) among policy makers

## **Functions/Elements of the System**

All the functions or elements of the early learning, care and afterschool system need to be thoughtfully considered separately and together in order to achieve our vision of an integrated, accessible, high quality system in Washington State. This work could be approached by considering either or both:

- Elements such as governance/leadership, standards, workforce, support/infrastructure, etc. *Anne Mitchell, Louise Stoney and many others have identified these elements and created useful system maps.*

- Roles, responsibilities and funding streams of each public entity involved in early learning, care and afterschool. *A useful model is League of Education Voters “Washington State Education Governance and Finance Map”.*

## **Goals**

The path is likely to be long and winding toward our vision of an integrated, accessible, high quality early learning, care and afterschool system in Washington State. Identified milestones, targets and outcomes along the path will be useful. Several organizations across Washington State are beginning this work.

## **Models of State Governance Structure**

*Taken from Anne Mitchell, Early Childhood Policy Research August 21, 2004 memo.*

### **What are states actually doing?**

Governance in other states is generally either initiated by Executive Order or set out in statute. The structures can be public agencies (Alaska, Massachusetts, Georgia), or public bodies (Illinois) or quasi-public entities (California, Kentucky), or mainly private organizations (Hawaii, Smart Start in NC) but with public-private links.

**Public** Creating a new department of early learning (or something like that) has only been tried rarely. Alaska did this for several years – merged child care and preK and state-funded Head Start – but they took it back apart. I’m not sure we know the whole story of why that happened. Georgia recently morphed the independent agency Office of School Readiness with the licensing and quality functions of child care from the state DHS and created the Department of Early Care and Learning (see <http://www.decal.state.ga.us/>). Massachusetts has just agreed to legislation that sets up an independent department of early education and care, governed by a board that is to start March 2005, with the department being operational by July 2005. This new board will parallel their current board of higher education and board of education. For more detail and the implementation timeline, see [www.tomfinneran.org](http://www.tomfinneran.org)

The Illinois Early Learning Council was created in 2003 in statute at the Governor’s request to support ongoing early learning planning and initiatives, and to plan a statewide early childhood system. The Council has been charged to 1) review and make recommendations of previous and ongoing early childhood efforts and initiatives; 2) develop multi-year plans to expand programs and services to address gaps and insufficient capacity to ensure quality; 3) make recommendations to reduce or eliminate policy, regulatory and funding barriers; 4) engage in collaborative planning, coordination and linkages across programs, divisions and agencies at the state level; and 5) report to the Governor and General Assembly on the Council’s progress toward its goals and objectives on an annual basis. It has no funding and does not directly control any funds or programs. The Council’s members are appointed by the Assembly, the Senate and the Governor.

**Quasi-public** California First Five Commissions are authorized in statute and have a state and a county structure. They are essentially planning and oversight bodies that are accountable for programs funded with the tobacco tax dollars. The state commission and many of the county commissions are funding universal prekindergarten, and they could morph into a broader role, and some do try to influence spending (child care, etc.) beyond their own tax dollars. See [www.cffc.ca.gov](http://www.cffc.ca.gov). Kentucky has the Early Childhood Development Authority, established in statute as a public agency and political subdivision of the Commonwealth. It has oversight and accountability for expenditures from the early childhood development fund (tobacco settlement dollars). The authority was originally attached to the Office of the Governor, Office of Early Childhood Development, for administrative purposes and can establish advisory councils. It is now connected to the Department of Education. See <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Early+Childhood+Development/Components+of+KIDS+NOW+Initiative.htm>

**Private (but with a public impetus and public links)** The North Carolina Smart Start structure is set up in statute that requires a state level 501C3 (The NC Partnership for Children) and local ones for counties or groups of counties. Obviously, Smart Start has a large amount (\$200 million) general fund money to manage, and in a sense is an ‘initiative’ but with a broad purpose, to make sure every child is healthy and comes to school ready to succeed. They have worked very closely with the state agency that administers child care money (Division of Child Development) and the state’s PreK program (More at Four) that is administered from the Governor’s Office. Last year, the Legislature appointed an Early Childhood Governance Group and charged it to come up with a way of coordinating these three – and the group has a plan they will release soon for public input. What we know is that their plan is based on child outcomes, is public-private, ultimately will have a single administrative structure with a clear early childhood purpose, and will have a child data system.

The Hawaii Good Beginnings Alliance is another model – they do not manage much money, but they are statutorily in charge of developing the early learning system. The Good Beginnings Alliance (GBA) is the statewide, nonprofit membership organization comprising the broad range of ECEC stakeholders. GBA is the coordinating public-private statewide structure charged to promote effective use of public, private, charitable and community resources; and accomplish specific tasks to build the ECEC system. In addition to its board, GBA has an advisory group. The Interdepartmental Council (IDC) is the public partner and the focal point for cross-agency collaboration and decision-making. Council members are the directors of the departments of Human Services, Health, Business and Economic Development and Tourism, Labor and Industrial Relations and the Superintendent of Education. In 2000, a representative from philanthropy and one from private business were added to the IDC. There are four Good Beginnings Councils, one in each of the state’s four counties (Oahu, Maui, Kauai and Hawaii). These community councils represent providers, consumers, businesses, nonprofits, and philanthropists. Each Good Beginnings Council assesses local strengths and

needs and generates resources for community programs and services for families with young children. See <http://www.goodbeginnings.org/>